

Alnwick Rural District.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year 1918.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

The climatic conditions of the year 1918 presented no very remarkable extremes. The early part of the year was more than usually mild, but a cold month of April blighted the prospect of a very early spring. The summer was comparatively dry but there was a deficiency of sunshine. The early part of the Autumn proved very wet and September showed much the heaviest rainfall of any month of the year. The year closed without any severe frost or snow-frost. The total rainfall was 28.18 inches for 1918 against 29.76 inches for 1917 and 37.9 inches for 1916. The rainfall for 1918 was 3.39 inches below the average of the last ten years.

VITAL STATISTICS.

For the year 1918 I have to present to you vital statistics which compare unfavourably with former years. There is, however, no difficulty in explaining either the high death rate or the low birth rate for the year. Up to the last three months of the year the number of deaths registered was unusually small, but in those three months nearly as many deaths occurred as in the previous year. The epidemic of the severe epidemic of influenza which swept over the district. The number of births for 1918 is the lowest recorded in the district. This decrease which has been very marked for the last three years is of course due to the which is so large a proportion of the most robust of the male population in war service.

As regards the number of deaths in the district I am unable to make my statistics agree absolutely with those supplied by the Registrar General, who in a memorandum states that such variations must exist apparently owing to differences between the number actually dying within the 52 weeks and those registered in the same period. The Registrar General makes the number 176, which I adopt in the first table of the general death rate. My returns from the local registrar's make the number 174 which I adopt when analysing the deaths for ages and sub-districts, as I have no means of placing the two additional deaths.

The number of deaths of persons not belonging to the district, but who died within it exactly balances the deaths of persons belonging to the district but who died out of it—21 in each case.

The following table shows the number of births and deaths belonging to the district for 1918 with the corresponding rates, and for comparison the figures for the preceding years are given.

	Birth rate per 1,000	Birth rate per 1,000	Death rate per 1,000	Death rate per 1,000
1916	20.00	16.92	14.0	12.80
1917	20.6	17.49	14.5	13.69
1918	19.7	16.53	17.6	16.53

In the above table for 1918 the birth rate is calculated on a population of 11,914. The death rate is calculated on a population of 10,833. The Registrar General's instructions. This arrangement is as Lord Dunsyre remarks "one of those things that no fellow can understand," and its most remarkable effect is to make the death rate higher for a smaller number of deaths, than the rate with a larger number of births. The number of births for 1918 was 9 less than in 1917 and 3 less than in 1916; the birth rate for 1918 being 96 less than in 1917 and 39 less than in 1916.

The number of deaths for 1918 was 31 more than in 1917 and 36 more than in 1916. The death rate for 1918 was 2.95 higher than in 1917 and 3.65 higher than in 1916.

Of the births 101 were males and 93 females. Of the deaths 77 were males and 59 females. Contrary to the figures for the two preceding years the balance is in both cases in favour of the male population, which as regards the deaths, is what one would expect to find in the withdrawal from the district of so many men. There is, I believe a popular superstition that a larger proportion of males is born in war time, but this is the first time in three years that this has been realized.

The following table shows the ages at which the deaths occurred and for comparison the two preceding years are given.

Under one year	1 year to 14 years	15 years to 24 years	25 years to 34 years	35 years to 44 years	45 years to 54 years	55 years to 64 years	65 years and over	Total
1916	15	1	3	3	10	13	23	68
1917	17	1	9	9	3	22	35	145
1918	14	3	6	5	14	35	50	174

The above table as I have already stated shows two deaths less than the return of the Registrar General. As I cannot trace those two deaths I am unable to classify them. This table shows a lamentable increase of the total number of deaths over previous years. It will be observed that the increased numbers for 1918 are confined to the deaths between the ages of 15 and 65. The number of deaths under 15 years in 1918 although greater than in 1916 is less than in 1917. The number of deaths under one year is one less than in 1916 and three less than in 1917, which fact although the most satisfactory in the table is discounted by the small number of the births. The great increase of deaths between the ages of 15 and 65 years is accounted for by one cause, i.e. influenza with its chief cause, broncho-pneumonia. The number of deaths from this cause was 36 and if this number be added

to the total of 140 for 1916 and 145 for 1917 it will be seen that in other returns, excluding this fatal epidemic, the returns for this district would have been quite as favourable as usual. The single deaths in 1916 and 1917 were 2 higher in 1915 than in 1917 and 13 less than in 1916.

The infantile death rate for the whole district in 1918 was 74.6 as compared with 82.2 for 1917 and 75.0 in 1916. In Warkworth sub-district 113 children were born and 9 died under one year. In Embleton sub-district 75 children were born and 6 died under one year. In Denwick sub-district 9 children were born and none died under one year.

This gives the sub-districts the following infantile death rates:

Warkworth	79.6	Embleton	80.0	Denwick	nil.
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The infantile death rate is thus seen to be very evenly divided between the two large sub-districts, as was also the case in 1917 although for several years previous the figures for Embleton sub-district had been extraordinarily favourable. Denwick sub-district which is so small to give an average has fluctuated from 230.7 in 1917 to nil in 1918.

As regards the total deaths for the sub-districts they were as follows: Warkworth, 97; Embleton, 65; and Denwick, 11, but I cannot give the death rates as I have no means of estimating their individual populations under the existing conditions.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year 1918 there were notified in the district 63 cases of infectious disease. Of these cases reported 14 were scarlet fever, 5 diphtheria, 3 erysipelas, 33 measles and 8 tuberculosis. As regards the sub-districts the distribution was as follows:

	Scarlet Fever	Diphtheria	Erysipelas	Measles	Tuberculosis	Total
Warkworth	14	3	3	32	5	55
Embleton	0	2	0	1	3	6
Denwick	0	0	0	0	0	0

The number of notifications for 1918 shows a considerable reduction on 1917 with 130 cases, and still more on 1916 when 185 cases were reported.

The Scarlet Fever cases all occurred in the south east part of the Warkworth sub-district in the first half of the year.

Diphtheria occurred as five single cases. This speaks well for the precautions taken in isolation and disinfection, as in no case did the disease spread beyond the first patient. In one case which occurred in a caravan I had to provide a tent for the rest of the family, and the season being summer, this succeeded admirably.

Measles occurred almost entirely in the early months of the year and there was no severe epidemic. Only one case is notifiable from any house within three months.

During 1918 we enjoyed complete immunity from enteric and puerperal fevers. Tuberculosis Disease. The number of cases reported was 8 for 1918 as against 7 for 1917, and 10 for 1916.

During the year 1918 there were registered 15 deaths from infectious disease, which is one more than in 1917. Of these deaths one was from scarlet fever, one from diphtheria, one from erysipelas and 12 from tuberculosis. Of the latter, and died in various institutions outside the district, although they were natives of the district, and therefore transferable for registration purposes. This gives a death rate from infectious disease of 1.41 per thousand per annum.

Influenza caused the deaths of 36 persons within the district, excluding the deaths of soldiers. If these 36 deaths be added to the deaths from infectious disease we get a total of 52 deaths of 31 giving a death rate from Zymotic diseases of 4.8 per thousand per annum. After an interval of about 28 years epidemic influenza has again manifested itself, particularly in the early part of the year. I can remember the epidemics of 1889-90 and 90-91, when a similar visitation appeared in the same way and caused much suffering and many deaths. The epidemic of 1918 is divided into two parts the first appearing in October and November. The first epidemic although quite evidently the influenza and affecting large numbers of the population was of a comparatively mild type and caused few deaths. The second epidemic in December and January proved to be the most virulent character. The complications which proved fatal were: (1) most frequently, a particularly septic form of broncho-pneumonia, usually affecting both lungs and (2) less frequently, subarachnoid meningitis, the cause of death being by extension to the brain. This latter complication mostly affected those who had previously had ear trouble. The shortage of medical men was very severely felt in this district, the supply in Alnwick and the surrounding district being for some weeks reduced to one civilian practitioner, who could not have carried on, but for the assistance of Capt. Threlfall, R.A.M.C., who was allowed to help in the Alnwick and Denwick. Even then it can be easily understood how ineffectively two men could, in such an epidemic, provide attendance for a district which found work for nine doctors in ordinary times before the war.

Finally I have to thank the Chairman and Council for their continued support and specially for their patience with regard to this report, which is somewhat overdue owing to causes which it is useless to re-iterate. To the Clerk and the Inspector I refer to express my obligation for frequent help, at a time when many outside duties were imposed upon them.

SCOTT-PURVES, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

INSPECTOR'S REPORT FOR 1918.

THE TOWN PLANNING, ETC. ACT, 1909. HOUSING (INSPECTION OF DISTRICT) REGULATIONS, 1910.

STRUCTURAL Improvements.—A dangerous gable which was bulging out at North Charlton, Middlemoor has been rebuilt. At Aton Dean a fence has been fixed in a fold yard to keep cattle off a cottage. Reed's property at Felton has been spoiled, and the horses in the Stable Road, Radcliffe. A yard at Cranley has been paved. Requirements.—Improved light and ventilation for River View, Alnmonth. Ventilation for a low loft, used as a bedroom, in the Butler's cottage at Ezzingham. Air grates under floors at Tillingham Farm Cottages. The lowering of a high wall behind a farm servants cottage at Denwick. The removal of the soil above ground floor level at Foxton Hall Cottages and at Hazon Mill.

OBJECTIVE SPOILING AND DAMPENING.—Excessive dampness, caused chiefly by defective ground level, are caused at the following places: Overharts, Slawdon Hill, the joiner's house at Newton-on-the-Moor, the Barn Road at Radcliffe, Shillbottle, Towa Farm, Low Leardish Hall, and cottage, Cottages at Gillingham Farm, cottages, Christon Bank, Redstead, Dial Place (Pringles) Warkworth Orchard Cottage at Leppur, Hazon Mill, Lemington Mill, Broadwood, Shipley Hill, Tarry at Ezzingham, and the lower, three cottages at Shillbottle, the joiner's house at Glanton, West End Cottage, Embleton, Browne's property at Alnmonth in particular in Chapel Lane which is flooded from the high ground of the Manor House.

WATER SUPPLY.—Improvements.—At Little Mill Station a new iron pipe has been laid from the well to the joiner's cottage, in place of one which caused the water to smell strongly of tar. Taped iron pipes were fixed in a better position. Requirements.—Better water supply are needed at Glaston Hill, Low Leardish, North Charlton Mill, Lemington Mill, East Link Hall, Swarbad Hall South Lodge, West Link Hall cottage, Shillbottle Farm Foot cottage, and Alnmonth Link Cottage.

DRAINAGE.—Improvements.—At Rose Cottage at Glanton a gully inside the scullery has been put outside. A new gully has been fixed at Shipley Lane, and one in Swarbad village. At Felton a surface water drain under a dwelling house has been disconnected from the sewer. New drainage has been provided at Haxley Lane Garden Cottage, Ezzingham Hill Cottage, the school, and at a cottage at the Terrace, Ezzingham, where a drain under the dwelling house has been diverted round the building.

Requirements.—New drainage is greatly needed at the easternmost cottage in Aclington, the pigeries at West Ditchburn, the blacksmith's (owned at Longhoughton 31, Craster South Side, Low Leardish cottage, the joiner's cottage at Alnmonth, "Preston Cottages" at Radcliffe, Denwick cottages, Ross cottages and the cook-house at Lemington, as well as the Bank Top, the Square at Lesbury, East Bolton, and the Middle Stead, Bolton Hall, Ezzingham, Harshope Hall Lodge, Ezzingham Moor Cottage at Tarry and the "Ogle Arms" Inn at Ezzingham.

PRIVIES, WATER CLOSETS, etc.—Improvements.—New privy ashpits have been built at Denwick Quarry House Cottages. A new wall closet has been erected at Rose Cottage, Glanton, at Ezzingham a privy has been erected, and a ashpit built for the schoolhouse.

Requirements.—Improved sanitary facilities are needed at the North Row at Shillbottle, where flooding occurs, Overharts, the Old Hall at Newton-by-the-Sea, High Row cottages at Ezzingham, the "Ogle Arms" at Newton-on-the-Moor, which are without barrows, Bilton Branch End, 30, Craster South Side, Low Leardish, Cottage, Slawdon East and West Lodges, Harshope Cottage at Ezzingham, the "Ogle Arms" and Orchard Cottage at Lesbury, Battlebridge, Lemington Hill Head, Hartlaw, North Charlton Farm East Link Hall, Bolton Mid Stead, Bolton Wood Hall, and the Schoolhouse, West Bolton buildings, "Lalham House" at Denwick, Low Buston, Nesvitt Lodge at Hulme Park and at the Park Farm cottages the Bothy at Harshope, Swarbad Farm, South Charlton, Glanton East Farm Aton Hall Cottages, and at Stanley Terrace, Embleton, where one foul privy exists for 21 persons.

MILK SUPPLY.—Forty-seven cow keepers are on the register who keep 413 cows for the public sale of milk which is 92 more than last year. The cowshed at one hole in a cowshed which opened into the yards of the houses at River Bank Road, Alnmonth, has been locked up.

DITCHES.—Improvements. Sewage ditches have been cleared at Bennington and

Requirements.—Final ditches contravening section 91 of the Public Health Act, 1875 exist at Addington Mart, Aberwick, Greenfield Moor, Broadfield, Tillingham Hall Hartlaw and Peppermoor.

DISINFECTION.—In addition to a number of houses infected at private expense, twenty houses have been disinfected with formalin by the Council.

INSPECTIONS.—Commencing in June, 1902, I have, in every year, endeavoured to inspect the whole of this rural district, and in 1918 I have called upon every township, I have called upon every District Councillor, 51 in number.

